

## INSURANCE DEPARTMENT RELEASES 2007 FIGURES

February, 2008. Insurance Commissioner Adam Hamm released figures today reporting \$8,904,116 recovered or saved for North Dakota citizens in 2007. This represents an increase of 52 percent from 2006.

In 2007, the Insurance Department received and made over 10,000 phone calls; helped 183 walk-in clients, and processed 233 formal complaints. It also handled over 9,400 State Health Insurance Counseling (SHIC) contacts and over 3,800 Prescription Connection For North Dakota (PC4ND) contacts.

forth in our programs that assist the elderly with health care decisions and low income North Dakotans with finding affordable medicine," Hamm said, referring to SHIC and PC4ND.

Of the \$8.9 million, almost \$4.9 million was provided as a result of SHIC and PC4ND. Since 2006, SHIC and PC4ND contacts have grown by 49 percent and 40 percent respectively.

For the full press release, visit:

<http://www.nd.gov/ndins/>

"I am particularly proud of the increased effort put



Adam W. Hamm  
Insurance Commissioner

### **Welcome to the RxConnector Newsletter!**

Dear Friends,

A special thank you to all of the volunteers that made the 2007 statistics mentioned above a reality!

Some volunteers have worked diligently by helping applicants fill out the prescription assistance forms while others have offered the physical space to house the medications. Many others helped with Part D Enrollment, which was a huge support to our senior population.

Some of the agencies we want to express our gratitude to include the Mental Health Association of North Dakota's (MHAND) for allowing us to use the 2-1-1 telephone line for Part D enrollment, the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) for their tireless members, and AARP for continuing our partnership.

We also want to thank all of the clinics, hospitals and pharmacists that help beneficiaries throughout the year with Prescription Connection.

Sincerely,

Adam W. Hamm  
Insurance Commissioner

**Contact the  
Department:**

**1.888.575.6611**  
**[insurance@nd.gov](mailto:insurance@nd.gov)**  
**[www.nd.gov/ndins](http://www.nd.gov/ndins)**

**NORTH  
DAKOTA**  
a program of the  
North Dakota  
Insurance Department

**Prescription  
Connection**  
*for North Dakota*

## PATIENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS COSTS TO CLINICS

Despite the fact that in 2004 there was access to more than 22 million prescriptions through PAPs and more than \$4 billion of available medications through these PAPs, they are often under-used because the application process can be so complicated and expensive.

The most expensive form of PAP application submission is by mail, which averaged \$28.03 per application; the least expensive was online submission at a cost of \$8.47 per application. Perhaps not surprisingly, personnel time cost

accounted for more than half the total application cost.

A lead researcher Patrick Clay, PharmD, and his colleagues offered several suggestions for lowering the PAP application enrollment process. These included outsourcing the entire PAP application process, computerizing the process, developing a universal PAP application process, and not requiring the prescriber's signature.

JMC Pharmacy.2007

## HEALTHWELL FOUNDATION

The HealthWell Foundation board of directors first met in 2003 in response to a growing challenge—how to help patients who have insurance but still cannot afford their medical treatments. On average the foundation receives over 4,000 applications every month. They review applications on a first-come, first-served basis. If unable to assist patients, the requests are referred to another foundation, patient assistance program or patient advocacy group. Eligibility is based on insurance, financial, and medical criteria.

Patients must have insurance coverage for the therapy for which they are requesting assistance. Their total household income must be below 400 percent of the Federal Poverty Level. The patient must be receiving therapy or waiting to start therapy under one of the disease areas HealthWell supports. For more information about the HealthWell Foundation, visit [www.healthwellfoundation.org](http://www.healthwellfoundation.org) or call 1-800-675-8416.

## FDA APPROVES GENERIC VERSIONS OF FOSAMAX

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has approved the first generic versions of the osteoporosis drug Fosamax (alendronate sodium tablets).

Teva Pharmaceuticals USA of North Wales, Pa., was approved to manufacture alendronate sodium tablets in three once-daily dosing strengths -- 5 milligrams, 10 milligrams, and 40 milligrams -- and two once-weekly dosing strengths of 35 milligrams and 70 milligrams. Barr Laboratories Inc. of Montvale, N.J., was approved to manufacture a 70 milligram once-weekly dose of the drug.

Fosamax is among the top 100 most frequently dispensed drugs in the United States, the trade magazine Drug Topics said. The FDA said labeling of the generic drug might differ from that of Fosamax because some portions of the labeling are protected by patents and exclusivity.

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## UPDATES ON MEDICARE SUMMARY NOTICES

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has changed the delivery schedule for Medicare Summary Notices (MSNs). MSNs were formerly sent out each month, but are now only being sent out on a quarterly basis.

Medical providers may send a bill that the Medicare beneficiary may need to pay before receiving their MSN. When the beneficiary gets the MSN he or she should look to see if he or she paid more than the MSN says is due. If the beneficiary paid more than required, he or she should call the provider about a refund.

MSN's also contain important information about appeal rights, including a form to use to file an appeal if one disagrees with any of the claims decisions included in the MSN. The form includes the date by which an appeal must be filed in order for the appeal to be timely (120 days after the date the MSN was received.)

## CHANGES TO MEDICARE APPEAL LEVELS

In 2008, beneficiaries wishing to bring appeals before an administrative law judge or the federal court will need to have greater dollar amounts at issue than in 2007, per 72 Federal Register 73348-73349 (December 27, 2007.)

The amount in controversy necessary to request an Administrative Law Judge hearing in 2008 is \$120. The amount in controversy necessary to request a Federal Court review in 2008 is \$1,180.

## TOGETHER RX ACCESS CARD AVAILABLE

The Together Rx Access Card is a free card to help people of all ages who have no prescription drug coverage and who are not eligible for Medicare. Cardholders bring the card to their pharmacist along with their prescription, and the savings are calculated at the pharmacy counter. Most cardholders save 25 to 40 percent on brand-name prescriptions.

To qualify for the Together Rx Access Card, applicants must:

- Have no prescription drug coverage
- Not be eligible for Medicare
- Have a household income equal to or less than \$30,000 for a single person, \$40,000 for a family of two and \$60,000 for a family of four
- Be a legal resident of the United States.

To enroll, call Prescription Connection for North Dakota at 1.888.575.6611.

## TAX REFUND FOR LOW INCOME SENIORS AND DISABLED PERSONS

BISMARCK, N.D. - Low-income senior citizens and disabled persons may be able to receive a refund for part of the money they paid as rent for their home or apartment in 2007, announced State Tax Commissioner Cory Fong. Mobile home residents may be eligible for a refund of part of the lot rent they paid. The deadline for filing for the refund is May 31.

"Even though the deadline is a few months away, we want to do what we can to make certain that everyone who is eligible knows about the deadline," said Fong.

The Tax Department offers the refund to renters who are 65 or older, or permanently and totally disabled at any age, and whose 2007 income was not over \$17,500. And, if 20 percent of the total amount of rent paid is more than four percent of their 2007 income, they could be eligible for a refund. The maximum amount of refund is \$240.

Fong encourages people who think they might qualify to contact the Tax Department in Bismarck at 701.328.3127 or toll-free at 800.638.2901, option 5, for more information.

## ROBERT BALL, ARCHITECT OF MEDICARE, DIES IN MARYLAND

Robert Ball -- a "chief architect" of Medicare who administered the program for its first seven years -- died at age 93 on Tuesday at Collington Episcopal Life Care Community in Mitchellville, Md., the [Washington Post](#) reports. In the past 25-years, Ball "helped reform and save" Medicare three times, according to the [Post](#).

In addition, he drafted the Kennedy-Mills bill, which proposed expanding health insurance to all U.S. residents. Ball also served as commissioner of Social Security from 1962 to 1973 (Sullivan, *Washington Post*, 1/31). Ball was interviewed as part of a [Kaiser Family Foundation](#) documentary series to mark the 40th anniversary of Medicare and Medicaid. The interview is available [online](#).

## VITAL FACTS ABOUT HIV HOME TEST KITS

Many HIV home tests are illegally marketed online and in newspapers and magazines. Consumers should know that there is only one FDA-approved home test system for HIV. Please visit this link for more information [Vital Facts About HIV Home Test Kits](#) or go to <http://www.fda.gov>.

## DATABASE OF FREE CLINICS IN THE UNITED STATES

Needy Meds is compiling a database of free clinics in the United States that provide medical care for free or based on a sliding fee scale according to the patient's ability to pay.

To add your organization's free clinic, go to [www.needymeds.com](http://www.needymeds.com) and click on "Advocates" to choose your method of completing the data.

***For a list of the 2008 Poverty Level Guidelines, go to [www.needymeds.com](http://www.needymeds.com).***

## ND DENTISTS REACH THOSE IN NEED THROUGH DDS

The Donated Dental Services (DDS) program is a partnership between the North Dakota Department of Oral Health Program, the ND Dental Association, and the National Foundation of Dentistry for the Handicapped. The program is for those who simply cannot afford dental care and may not be eligible to receive public aid such as Medicaid or Medicare, including the elderly or people with disabilities.

Individuals who need care can contact the Donated Dental Service Program coordinator at 866-572-9390 (toll-free.) For more information about the Donated Dental Services Program, contact Kimberlie Yineman at 701-328-4930 or Joe Cichy, at 701-223-8870. Additional information about the Donated Dental Services Program in North Dakota can be found at [http://nfdh.org/joomla\\_nfdh/content/view/75/112/](http://nfdh.org/joomla_nfdh/content/view/75/112/)

## NEW DENTAL CLINIC IN GRAND FORKS

Grand Forks Dental Clinic, 212 South 4<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 101 in Grand Forks, ND is the dental site of the Valley Community Health Centers non-profit, community owned organization. They also have two medical facilities.

The Dental Clinic can be reached by calling 701-757-2100. Their hours are 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday through Friday. They provide cleanings, examinations, fillings and extractions and serve people of all ages, people with MN and ND Medicaid, and people without insurance. There is a \$30 charge for a dental clinic visit for those without insurance. Sliding fee discounts are available also. Call 218-773-6100 or 800-726-3692 with questions.



## PATIENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM UPDATES

Boehringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals, Inc started a new program for people with Medicare Part D.

Roche Pharmaceuticals has added Fuzeon to its HCV/HIV/Transplants PAP.

Xubex Pharmaceuticals added Lomotil, Rhythmol, Flonase, Duneb and Zyrtec.

Astra Zeneca has created an application for all its different PAPs.

TussiCaps has been added to the Mallinckrodt PAP.

As of December 2007, the IVAX patient assistance program transferred over to TEVA. All the medicines that were available on the IVAX program may not be available on the TEVA PAP.

The Gilead Advancing Access PAP has a new application. Astra Zeneca has added Seroquel XR Extended Release Tablets to both the AZ&Me Prescription Savings Program and AZ&Me Prescription Savings Program for people without insurance.

## PROFILE OF OLDER AMERICANS: 2007

This annual summary of the latest statistics on the older population covers 16 topical areas including population, income and poverty, living arrangements, education, and health. A description of the highlights of this document is below and the full document is attached.

Of particular note is the special topic section in this issue based on a forthcoming report by the Federal Interagency Forum on Aging Related Statistics entitled, Selected Indicators of Retirement Resources among People Aged 55-64: 1984, 1994, and 2004. The report was developed by staff of the Social Security Administration. The more detailed full report will be available of the Forum web site, [www.agingstats.gov](http://www.agingstats.gov), after it is issued during the first quarter of calendar year 2008.

The Profile has proven to be a very useful statistical summary in a user friendly format. It is now a web based publication and will be posted shortly on the AoA web site.

## FAMILYWIZE PRESCRIPTION DRUG DISCOUNT CARD

Prescription drug discount cards are being distributed free of charge nationwide by the Family Wize Partnership and participating agencies. The card covers ALL prescription drugs. Cards are available by calling Prescription Connection for North Dakota @ 1.888.757.6611. Go to [www.FAMILYWIZE.org](http://www.FAMILYWIZE.org) for a list of participating pharmacies and other helpful information.

## STATE HEALTH INSURANCE COUNSELING PROGRAM RECERTIFICATION TRAINING

The State Health Insurance Counseling Program (SHIC) is a program of the North Dakota Department of Insurance which helps people understand the details of Medicare. The program relies on statewide volunteers to help counsel beneficiaries.

The counselor recertification training will be held on March 3, 2008. The training will be via Interactive Video Network (IVN) and counselors will be able to participate at 11 sites across North Dakota. To register for this FREE training, or to become a volunteer, email Cindy Sheldon at [csheldon@nd.gov](mailto:csheldon@nd.gov) or call her at 1.888.575.6611.



**IS YOUR MEDICARE BENEFICIARY ALREADY  
EXPERIENCING DONUT HOLE ISSUES? THERE IS  
HELP!! CALL PRESCRIPTION CONNECTION FOR  
NORTH DAKOTA AT 1.888.575.6611.**